The Vanity of Human Life.

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SERMON.

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SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. THOMAS'S,

JANUARY 1, 1776,

For the BENEFIT of the

CHARITY SCHOOL,

IN GRAVEL-LANE, SOUTHWARK.

BY JAMES PICKBOURN.

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The Vanity of Human Life.

ECCLES. Chap. I. Ver. 2.

VANITY OF VANITIES, SAITH THE PREACHER, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY.

THESE words contain an eſtimate of human life;—an eſtimate made by the wiſeſt of men, and the greateſt of princes;—a man who had long experienced the pleaſures and gaieties of the world, and was thoroughly acquainted with every ſpecies of earthly good. Solomon was in poſſeſſion of every thing his heart could wiſh for; had all the enjoyments which honour, wealth, and pleaſure can give to their moſt favoured votaries: nor did he neg-

left to try the utmoſt value of all the means of happineſs in his power; but gave free indulgence to every inclination, and withheld not his heart from any thing that appeared good. But, notwithſtanding he enjoyed ſuch ample advantages for the acquiſition of happineſs, and purſued it with ſuch intenſe application, yet, ſuch are the emptineſs and inſufficiency of all earthly delights, that he was forced at laſt (after innumerable and repeated diſappointments) to cry out as in the words of our text, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This was not the exclamation of a ſudden and tranſient fit of deſpondency, but the fixed and ſettled judgment of his mind, after mature and deliberate reflection. And ſo firmly was he convinced of the truth of this opinion, that he wrote the whole book of Eccleſiaſtes, with the ſole view of inculcating it. The authority of Solomon ought, therefore, to have great weight in determining our judgment. Had it been merely the ſentiment of a ſplenetic recluſe, or viſionary enthuſiaſt, its contrariety to the current opinions of the world might have been an excuſe for treating it with contempt. But the judgment of a man of ſuch extenſive wiſdom and experience;—a man who

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had amply tasted the sweets of human life, and was thoroughly conversant with the whole circle of its enjoyments;—the cool and deliberate judgment of such a man cannot but deserve our attention.

Let us, therefore, employ a few minutes in considering the reasons which might induce Solomon to form so disadvantageous an idea of human life. This will lead us, secondly, to consider the end for which a wise and good Providence has permitted such a state of vanity to take place; and, thirdly, the conduct becoming rational beings in such a state.

These subjects are not only very interesting in themselves, but likewise peculiarly adapted to the present occasion. We are now, through the good Providence of God, entering upon another year, and beginning a new period of life; we cannot, therefore, better employ our thoughts than in meditating upon the nature and end of our being, and the manner in which we ought to behave ourselves, in order to attain that end. Permit me, therefore, to request, that you will not only hear me with candour, but likewise

with that particular attention which is ſuited to the occaſion of our preſent meeting, and the high importance of the ſubjects offered to your conſideration. And may God vouchſafe his preſence, and bleſſing upon our endeavours; and grant, that a year, begun by theſe ſolemn meditations, may be uniformly ſpent in a manner becoming us, as Men and Chriſtians!

In the firſt place, we are to conſider the reaſons which might induce the wiſeſt of men to form ſuch an humiliating idea of human life, "Vanity of vanities, ſaith the Preacher, vani-"ty of vanities, all is vanity."

There is nothing in which mankind, eſpecially the young and unexperienced, are more liable to miſtake, than in eſtimating the happineſs of the preſent ſtate. When we firſt launch into the world, and enter upon the buſy ſcenes of life, our expectations are, in general, extremely warm and ſanguine. We ſee happineſs before us in a thouſand forms; and flatter ourſelves that nothing is eaſier than to attain it. Elated with hope, and eager with expectation, we fancy ourſelves already about to take poſ-

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ſeſſion. Here, it is true, we are uſually check-ed by the ſalutary counſel of our friends, and admoniſhed of the vanity and emptineſs of all worldly enjoyments. But it is not the experience of ten thouſand friends,—it is not the wiſdom of Solomon that can reſcue us from the deluſion. Others may have been diſappointed, but our plans are laid more ſecurely. We, therefore, eagerly preſs forward; and, inſtead of being ſtopped in our career by ſuch ſalutary admonitions, perhaps add freſh wings to the purſuit. For a moment, every thing conſpires to complete our wiſhes. But, before we have made any conſiderable progreſs, ſome croſs accident or other ariſes to obſtruct our courſe. At this diſappointment we are ſurpriſed, but, however, by no means diſpirited. We have been baffled in one attempt; but a ſecond, without doubt, will be ſucceſsful. We, therefore, again with equal ardour betake ourſelves to the purſuit; and our expectations are again blaſted by misfortune. And tho' we again and again renew our endeavours, and ſpend whole years of anxiety and labour in the attempt, yet, it not unfrequently happens, that we are at laſt forced to ſit down in diſcontent, without ever being

being able to reach the object of purſuit. And even in thoſe caſes where our endeavours are ſucceſsful, how often does it happen, that poſſeſſion is the greateſt of all diſappointments? While the object is at a diſtance, we think nothing elſe neceſſary to complete our happineſs; but no ſooner is it within our power, than we are convinced of the miſtake, and diſcover, that, inſtead of a reality, we have been purſuing a mere phantom, or ſhadow. Diſappointed in our expectations from this quarter, we form a new plan of life, and betake ourſelves to the purſuit of a new object: nor are we here more ſucceſsful than in the firſt inſtance. The ſame round of difficulties, and perplexities, and diſappointments, again occurs. And, though we try every ſcheme which imagination can ſuggeſt, though we range the whole compaſs of Nature, and exhauſt its utmoſt ſtore, we ſhall, in the end, find ourſelves but little nearer the completion of our wiſhes, than when we firſt ſet out upon the journey of life. Such are the unbounded deſires of the human ſoul, and ſuch the emptineſs and inſufficiency of all earthly enjoyments, that complete happineſs is not to be obtained in the preſent ſtate. We may run,

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and labour, and ſtrive; but the reſult will be "vanity and vexation of ſpirit*. The eye is "never ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the ear filled "with hearing†". There is no condition of life in which the mind of man can reſt as in it's proper centre. Whatever advantages we enjoy, yet there is always ſomething or other wanting, which creates anxiety and diſſatisfaction. The principal ingredient of our preſent happineſs is hope; nor is there any thing elſe that could render our condition ſupportable. Human life is one continued reſtleſs endeavour after ſomething unpoſſeſſed. If our poſſeſſions increaſe, our views and expectations generally increaſe with them: and the faſter we purſue, the farther we are diſtant from the object of purſuit. "Man is therefore even in his beſt ſtate alto-"gether vanity**". Though his affairs be ever ſo proſperous and ſucceſsful, yet his mind is reſtleſs, and his deſires unſatisfied. He never arrives at any ſtation, in which he would chooſe to continue; but is always extending his views forward, and aiming at ſomething better than he has ever yet enjoyed, or than he ever will enjoy in this world.

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* Eccleſ. ii. 17. † Eccleſ. i. 8. ** Pſalm. xxxix. 5.

THUS far we have conſidered the vanity of human life, only as it ariſes from the inſufficiency of all preſent objects to gratify the unbounded deſires of the ſoul. But there is another ſource of vanity, not leſs conſiderable, which reſults from the very frame and conſtitution of man himſelf. Were the enjoyments of life ever ſo ſubſtantial and ſatisfactory in themſelves, yet ſuch is the frailty of our nature, that it is impoſſible we ſhould long be ſatisfied with them. The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life, and the many infirmities and diſeaſes to which we are daily liable, are alone ſufficient to prevent our enjoying any ſubſtantial and laſting happineſs. So brittle is the human frame, that its powers may be diſconcerted by a thouſand accidents; and its beſt delights are every moment liable to be imbittered by ſickneſs, or terminated by death. "Man that is born of a woman "is of few days, and full of trouble. He "cometh forth, like a flower, and is cut "down. He fleeth alſo as a ſhadow and con-"tinueth not*." Upon this ſubject there is but little

* Job xiv. 1, 2.

little occaſion for me to expatiate. A ſmall degree of reflection will convince us, that this is a very ample ſource of human vanity. What is now become of the innumerable multitudes of men, who, in former ages, inhabited this earth? They have all, in their reſpective generations, appeared much in the ſame circumſtances that we do at preſent. They have, for a few years, buſily engaged themſelves in the affairs of human life;—have laboured, and toiled, and wearied themſelves, in various purſuits; then dropped into the grave, and been ſucceeded by others, who have purſued the ſame courſe, and are come to the ſame end. And what is there now remaining of all their labours, and of the works which they performed under the ſun? As they have formerly been in our ſituation, ſo ſhall we, 'ere long, be in theirs. And, a few centuries hence, it will ſcarcely be known that we ever exiſted.

Upon ſuch a view of things,—upon conſidering the emptineſs and inſufficiency of our preſent enjoyments, and the frailty and mortality of our nature, who can help exclaiming with the wiſe man in the text, "Vanity of vanities, "all is vanity?"

This repreſentation of human life will, I am ſenſible, by the young and unexperienced, be thought much too gloomy. But the diſappointments of a few years, at leaſt the decay of nature, and the approach of death, will not fail to convince them of its truth.

The vanity of the preſent ſtate is a thing not only very humiliating, but which, at firſt view, appears very difficult to be accounted for. We are the creatures of an infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good Being;—a Being, who could have no other poſſible end in our creation, but the production of happineſs. How, then, comes it to paſs, that we, at preſent, attain ſo little of that which was the ſole end of our creation? For what purpoſe has the ſupreme all-bounteous Parent thought proper to ſubject his offſpring to ſo much vanity? This queſtion (which we propoſed to conſider under the ſecond general head of diſcourſe) never was, and, I apprehend, never could have been ſatisfactorily reſolved, without the aid of Divine Revelation. A life of ſo much vanity and affliction, terminated by the blank period of death, is not eaſy to be reconciled with the belief, that every thing is under

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the direction of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs. In the reſolution of this query there are many difficulties, not to be ſurmounted by unaſſiſted reaſon. Here the Goſpel of Jeſus happily comes in to our relief.

This divine book informs us, that mankind are a fallen race of creatures, and that the vanity and mortality of the preſent ſtate were occaſioned by the apoſtacy of our firſt parents. But what is of much more importance, it not only points out the ſource of the diſeaſe, but likewiſe the cure. It diſplays to our view a glorious plan of redemption; by which Divine Wiſdom brings good out of this evil, and order out of this confuſion.

To aſcribe the vanity of the preſent ſtate to the fall of man would not, I apprehend, alone remove the difficulty; becauſe the queſtion would ſtill remain, why ſhould Divine Goodneſs permit ſo deſtructive an event? But if we conſider the fall in connexion with the recovery, and if it ſhould appear that the ſtate of things, introduced by the former, is ſubſervient

to the latter, and eminently calculated to promote the perfection and final happineſs of man; —upon ſuch a view of the caſe, we ſhall readily conceive that the permiſſion of this event is by no means inconſiſtent with the Divine perfections.

THAT we may form ſome idea of the reaſons for which the vanity of the preſent world is permitted, let us, therefore, conſider the ſtate of man as it is repreſented to us in the Goſpel. Our bleſſed Lord "has brought life and immorta-"lity to light*;" and taught us to conſider this world as a ſtate of trial, of education and diſcipline, principally intended to prepare us for thoſe future ſcenes of glory and felicity which he has revealed; and to look upon this life as the infancy of our being,—the firſt ſtage of an eternal exiſtence,—the beginning of a plan, which will continue in execution to everlaſting ages. This we might poſſibly have conjectured from the light of nature; but we could never have arrived at any certain proof of it without a Divine Revelation. And unleſs we take in this ſuppoſition,—unleſs we conſider this life

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

life as preparative and introductory to another, the preſent condition of man is utterly inexplicable. But when this idea is preſented,—when the mind is inſpired with the Chriſtian hope of immortality, the myſtery is unfolded; and the difficulties, which before appeared inſurmountable, admit an eaſy and pleaſing ſolution. For the only reaſon which makes us think the vanity of human life inconſiſtent with the perfections of God, is, becauſe we are apt to look upon this world as an entire plan in itſelf, and conſequently to imagine, that preſent happineſs was the ſole end of our creation. While our views are thus limited,—while we take in but one ſingle link of the infinite chain of duration,—while we only attend to one ſhort period of an everlaſting exiſtence, no wonder that every thing appears dark and myſterious. For it is impoſſible to judge of the propriety of any particular part of a ſcheme, unleſs we conſider its connexion with the whole. When we view the ſeveral movements of a complex machine, ſingly and apart, without obſerving their relation to each other, we are intirely at a loſs to know what they were intended for; but no ſooner do we ſee them joined together, and mutually conſpiring

ſpiring to promote one common end, than we diſcern their uſefulneſs. In like manner, when we conſider the preſent world merely as it is in itſelf, without attending to its connexion with another, we are ſurpriſed that an infinitely Wiſe, Powerful, and Good Being ſhould have permitted ſuch a ſyſtem of things to take place. But when we extend our views, and take in the whole compaſs of our being,—when we look upon this life as only a ſmall part of an eternal exiſtence, and as chiefly deſigned to prepare us for what is to come hereafter, the ſurpriſe ceaſes; and we adore the wiſdom of Providence in thoſe very appointments, which before appeared the chief difficulties in the Divine adminiſtration. If the only end of man had been to enjoy happineſs in this world, he would, undoubtedly, have been formed in ſuch a manner as to attain it. But, as he was deſigned for a much higher and more noble purpoſe,—as the main end of his being ſent into this world was to prepare him for another of infinitely greater value,—a world in which he is to enjoy conſummate happineſs throughout eternal ages,—as this was the grand purpoſe of his being, it certainly became the wiſdom of Providence, to

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adapt his circumſtances, rather to the attainment of this end, than to the attainment of preſent eaſe and pleaſure. For of what importance is this ſhort and tranſitory ſcene, when compared to that eternal one which will ſucceed it? The vanity of the world, will not, therefore, be thought inconſiſtent with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Creator, if we can make it appear, that it has a tendency to promote this end,---to prepare us for a ſtate of future perfection and happineſs. And that it really has ſuch a tendency cannot but be apparent to the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. If complete happineſs were attainable in this world, we ſhould never give ourſelves the trouble to ſeek for it in another;—our minds would be ſo wholly taken up with the enjoyment of the preſent good, that we ſhould never think of preparing for the future. If we look into the world, and minutely obſerve the ſituations, tempers, and purſuits of men, we ſhall generally find, that thoſe perſons who enjoy the greateſt ſhare of temporal proſperity and happineſs, are more thoughtleſs about futurity, and have leſs ſenſe of religion upon their minds, than ſuch as have been more frequently diſciplined in the ſchool of diſappointment and adverſity. Nothing has ſo ſtrong a tendency to diſengage us from the

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world, and make us attentive to the great end of our being, as the troubles and afflictions we here meet with. The preſent world is evidently calculated for a ſtate of moral diſcipline and improvement. The difficulties with which it abounds are uſeful trials and exerciſes of virtue; and are neceſſary to anſwer the important ends of our preſent infant ſtate of being. It is only, "if need be †," that calamity is permitted to aſſail us. "For God never afflicts willingly, nor "grieves the children of men *." The evils of life are the friendly admonitions and chaſtiſements of our Heavenly Father; nor are they ever inflicted with any other view, than "for our pro-"fit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs. "And though no chaſtening, for the preſent, "ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous, never-"theleſs, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable "fruit of righteouſneſs unto them who are ex-"erciſed thereby **."

THE mind of man cannot be duly eſtabliſhed in thoſe principles of rectitude, which conſtitute its chief glory, but by a "patient continuance in "well-doing §." Virtue is a habit; and habits can only

* 1 Pet. i. 6. † Lam iii. 33. ** Heb. xii. 10, 11.
§ Rom. ii. 7.

only be acquired by repeated acts; and theſe acts cannot take place, unleſs proper occaſions be preſented. That ſuch occaſions might not be wanting, and that our moral powers might have that cultivation and exerciſe, which are neceſſary to their perfection, the great Parent of mankind has ordained the preſent world for a ſchool of virtue, a ſeminary of education, in which he has placed us, for a ſhort time, to improve our minds, and prepare us for the future ſtages of our being. And the vanity with which it abounds, is wiſely calculated to promote this end. In a ſtate of uninterrupted proſperity, many of the ſublimeſt virtues of the Chriſtian life could not be cultivated; for, as they have miſery for their object, if that were removed, they would want ſcope for that continued exertion which is neceſſary to form them into habits, and bring them to maturity.

We have, therefore, great reaſon to believe, that no ſtate would be more favourable to the final perfection and happineſs of man, than that which Providence has appointed. In many caſes, we evidently diſcern the propriety of ſuch a conſtitution of things; and if we do not obſerve

it in all caſes, the only reaſon is, that our faculties are too narrow to comprehend all the deſigns of Infinite Wiſdom;—it is, becauſe we are incapable of taking in the whole of ſo vaſt a plan, as that which Providence has laid;—a plan, which commenced with the creation, and extends to the remoteſt ages of eternity. However, though there are many caſes in which the ways of Providence are too myſterious for us to unfold, yet there is, upon the whole, ſuch an abundant and manifeſt prevalence of order, beauty, and utility, in the world, as leaves not the leaſt room to doubt, but that univerſal nature is under the direction of an infinitely wiſe and good Being; and that, therefore, all things muſt be right.

HAVING thus conſidered the vanity of human life, and the end for which it was permitted to take place, I ſhall conclude the diſcourſe, by briefly pointing out and enforcing the conduct becoming ſuch a ſituation.

THE preſent world (though it abounds with innumerable traces of Divine Goodneſs), is, nevertheleſs, a ſcene of vanity and imperfection;

tion;—a ſtate in which complete felicity can never be obtained: nor indeed was this the end for which it was appointed. It was not deſigned ſo much for a ſtate of enjoyment, as of education and diſcipline: it is the infancy of our being; the firſt entrance upon an eternal exiſtence: and the grand deſign of it is to qualify us for enjoying happineſs in future ages. It is impoſſible, therefore, to heſitate one moment in determining what courſe of life we ought to purſue. Certainly that conduct is moſt becoming, which is beſt calculated to promote the principal end of our being, which is, our preparation for eternal happineſs in another world. And this preparation is only to be made, by improving our minds in the principles and habits of religion and virtue. This is the method in which God has appointed us to ſeek for happineſs; and it is the only method in which we can ever poſſibly attain it. "If we forſake this fountain "of living waters, and hew out for ourſelves "ciſterns, they will be broken ciſterns, which "will hold no water *." This world contains no enjoyments adequate to the capacities of an immortal ſpirit. The grand importance of it

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* Jer. xi. 13.

conſiſts, in its being a ſchool of virtue, and affording us an opportunity of preparing ourſelves for the enjoyment of perfect everlaſting felicity hereafter. And the very ſame courſe of action, which is beſt adapted to prepare us for the final perfection and happineſs of our being, is likewiſe beſt adapted to promote our happineſs at preſent. Let us then think ſeriouſly upon the nature of our ſituation. "Here have we no "continuing city, but we ſeek one to come *." We are only pilgrims and ſtrangers upon earth, and therefore ought to keep our eye ſteadily fixed upon the end of our journey, and "paſs the time of our ſojourning here in fear †." We are candidates for immortality, and our everlaſting condition depends upon our preſent conduct. "Life and death, bleſſing and cur-"ſing **," happineſs and miſery, are ſet before us, and are the objects of our free choice. Let us then examine well before we determine; and ſolemnly aſk ourſelves, "what we "ſhould be profited, if we could gain the whole "world, and loſe our own ſouls ††?.' When compared

* Heb. xiii. 14.

** Deut. xxx. 19.

† 1 Pet, i. 17.

†† Matth. xvi. 26.

compared to the felicity of Heaven, the whole world is vanity, and all its enjoyments "vexation of ſpirit." How amazing then is the infatuation of thoſe grovelling wretches, who prefer the mean unſatisfactory pleaſures of time, to the ſublime and ſubſtantial joys of eternity? Language ſcarcely furniſhes terms ſtrong enough to ſet forth the folly of ſuch a conduct. It is loſing the higheſt poſſible good, and getting "nothing, yea, leſs than nothing" in lieu of it.

THE buſineſs, for which we came into the world, is of the higheſt importance; and the time allowed us to perform it in not only ſhort, but very uncertain; let us not then trifle away our precious moments, but diligently apply ourſelves to "the things which belong to our peace, "before they be for ever hid from our eyes *." Time can never be recalled; if therefore we miſpend it, the loſs will be irretrievable. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of "ſalvation †;" but how much longer the offers of Divine Mercy will be continued,—how much longer indulgent Heaven will bear with our

* Luke xix. 42. † 2 Cor. vi. 2.

our preſumption, none of us can tell. "We "know not what even a day may bring forth *. "For what is our life? It is even a vapour, "that appeareth for a little time, and then va-"niſheth away †." Every day's experience confirms this melancholy truth;—every day preſents us with freſh inſtances of mortality. Death makes his approaches by a thouſand avenues, and ſooner or later extends his gloomy dominion over the whole world of mankind. None can reſiſt his fatal ſtroke. Perſons of every nation, of every rank and degree in life, of every age, are ſubject to his power. Many are cut off in their firſt entrance upon life, others in the bloom of youth, or prime of manhood; an advanced age is a happineſs which comparatively but few attain; notwithſtanding we almoſt all of us with ſo much confidence preſume upon it. Let us then take warning, before it be too late. Let the many inſtances of mortality, with which the laſt, as well as other years, has furniſhed us, excite us to uſe greater diligence in improving that farther ſpace which is allotted us. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we "are

* Prov. xxvii. 1. † James iv. 14.

" are not conſumed ‡, it is the effect of great indulgence, that our day of grace is thus far lengthened, and that notwithſtanding our unworthineſs, and miſimprovement of paſt time, we are preſerved to the beginning of another year. Let us, therefore, begin this year well, firmly reſolving, through Divine aſſiſtance, to devote the remaining part of our lives to thoſe important purpoſes, for which Heaven has granted it; and let us not dare to perſiſt any longer in a courſe of folly; leſt the patience and long ſuffering of the moſt Merciful of Beings ſhould be wearied out, and we, like many others, " be cut down as cumberers of the ground*.

THE principal end for which we were ſent into this vain world, was to educate and train us up for Heaven; and the merciful deſign of Providence, in thus ſparing our lives, is to allow us farther time for this purpoſe,—for the inſtruction and improvement of our minds in religion and virtue.—But though it is our firſt concern to cultivate the Divine life and temper

‡ Lam. iii. 22. * Luke xiii. 7.

temper in our own ſouls, yet we ought by no means to be inattentive to the improvement of others. Not a ſingle creature we behold was made for itſelf alone, but intended to promote the common good. It is our duty to be mutually ſubſervient to each others intereſt, and upon all proper occaſions, to inſtruct, exhort, and edify one another. Children and young perſons more eſpecially ſtand in need of this aſſiſtance; nor can their friends confer upon them a more important benefit. Education is the great buſineſs of life; and no part of it ſo intereſting, as that which takes place in our earlieſt years. The firſt impreſſions made upon our tender minds are generally laſting, and have a powerful influence upon our future conduct. And therefore Solomon ſays, "Train up a "child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is "old he will not depart from it.†" The education of children is then a duty which demands our particular attention, and ſhould upon no conſideration be neglected. The wiſeſt and beſt among us have formerly received inſtruction from others, and are much indebted to the kind offices

† Prov. xxii. 6.

offices of our friends, for the attainments we have made. The bleſſings we have received we ought certainly to communicate, and render that aſſiſtance to the riſing generation, which our tender years and inexperience received from the good examples and pious inſtructions of thoſe who came before us.

THIS duty is particularly incumbent on parents and heads of families;—who muſt be highly culpable if they neglect the inſtruction of thoſe whom Providence has committed to their care. But theſe are not the only perſons who are under obligations to this duty; nor are theſe the only caſes in which it ſhould be diſcharged. There are inſtances, unhappy inſtances, of children, who have no parents to inſtruct them, and of others whoſe parents are incapable of performing this important office. But is it the will of Heaven that ſuch children ſhould remain without inſtruction, and "be de-"ſtroyed for lack of knowledge †?" Humanity forbids the thought. The common parent of our race has implanted a principle in our breaſts, which will not ſuffer us to be unmoved, when

† Hoſ. iv. 6.

ſuch objects preſent themſelves. And every man, whoſe heart is not frozen with avarice, and corrupted by long cuſtom of ſinning, feels a pleaſure in contributing to their relief.

OBJECTS of this kind you have now before you. The children, you here ſee, depend upon public liberality for their education, and were not it for this reſource, would be expoſed to all thoſe evils which the want of this important bleſſing generally occaſions. Their caſe I now humbly recommend to your attention. They belong to the Charity School in Gravel Lane, Southwark: an account of which permit me to lay before you.

" THE foundation of this ſchool was laid in " the year 1687, in the reign of King James " the Second, when a ſchool was ſet up by one " Poulton, a Jeſuit, and public notice was " given, that he would inſtruct the children of " the poor gratis; upon which Mr. Arthur " Shallet, Mr. Samuel Warburton, and Mr. " Ferdinando Holland, laid the foundation of " this ſchool, to avoid the dangerous conſequen- " ces of a Popiſh School, and to provide for the " inſtruction of the poor in the Proteſtant way.

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" The number of the ſcholars at firſt was " forty, it afterwards increaſed to fifty, and is " now two hundred. They are taught to read, " write, and cypher, and inſttucted in the prin- " ciples of Chriſtianity, and thereby qualified " for the ſervice of God and Man. It may be " ſaid to be the firſt ſchool the Proteſtant Diſ- " ſenters were concerned in. Here, objects are " received without diſtinction of parties; the " common good being intended. It is ſituated " in one of the pooreſt parts of this city, and " the children of the pooreſt ſort of watermen, " fiſhermen, and others, are here taught, with- " out any expence to their parents; and are " furniſhed with ſpelling-books, teſtaments, ca- " techiſms, and writing and cyphering-books. " The girls are taught to ſew and knit; and " ſome of the boys are taught to work; and " the profits ariſing from their labours diſtri- " buted among the moſt deſerving of them.

" The charges have been defrayed, by the " gifts and ſubſcriptions of private perſons, " with two annual collections, and the kind " remembrance of the ſaid ſchool by ſome in " their laſt wills."

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THE plan of this ſchool is ſo unexceptionable, the motives of its inſtitution ſo laudable, and the principles upon which it is conducted ſo truly catholic, that the bare recital is a powerful recommendation of it. Every friend to humanity, every lover of his country, every true Chriſtian, and more eſpecially every zealous Proteſtant, muſt wiſh well to this inſtitution. It is calculated to relieve the diſtreſſes of human nature; as it affords the means of inſtruction, and conſequently of happineſs, to a number of poor children, who muſt otherwiſe have been deprived of thoſe advantages. It is calculated to promote the good of our country; ſuch an education being well adapted to make them uſeful members of ſociety. And it is likewiſe calculated to advance the cauſe of Chriſtianity and Proteſtantiſm; particular care being taken to eſtabliſh them in theſe important points.

I HOPE, therefore, an undertaking ſo truly laudable will not fail to receive your generous encouragement and ſupport; and I humbly truſt the bleſſing of Heaven will reward your liberality, and crown the inſtitution with ſucceſs. AMEN.

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